

DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES SYMPOSIUM A SUMMARY

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Christina Batteate and Jennifer Venema are students in the BCRP program, and participated in the organizing team of the symposium.

To stimulate debate on the quality of public spaces and their design, the CRP Department sponsored a symposium with four presenters from different disciplines to talk about their experiences around the globe. Christina Batteate and Jennifer Venema, BCRP students, present a summary of the presentations and their view of the symposium.

On October 20, 2006 California Polytechnic State University at San Luis Obispo's City and Regional Planning Department hosted the *Design of Public Spaces Symposium*. Four speakers brought their local and global interdisciplinary expertise. Denise Alcantara, architect and PhD candidate at Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, elaborated on her doctoral research about the public's perception of the revitalization of historic Rio de Janeiro. Lawrence Herzog, professor of city planning at San Diego State University, explored civic culture and various perceptions of public space in European and North American contexts. Daniel Levi, professor of environmental psychology at Cal Poly, brought a psychologist's perspective on the public and urban spaces at Thailand. Leo O'Brian,

vice president of Landscape Architecture, Urban Planning and Design for the Irvine Community Development Company, illustrated his company's approach for creating public space in new developments. What we gain from this rich combination of speakers is a vivid glimpse into the design and quality of public spaces across the globe.



Figure 1: The symposium attracted a big audience to CAED's Berg Gallery.

Figure 2: The presenters from left to right: Larry Herzog, Denise Alcantara, Daniel Levi, and Leo O'Brian.



The year 2006 marked a major turning point in urban life worldwide. For the first time in human history, more than half (51 percent) of the world's population made their home in urban settings, a number that will only continue to rise. For planners and urban designers, the quality of life for these inhabitants is now more important than ever. Being that the majority of urban dwellers are not rich and cannot afford private amenities, the demand for publicly accessible spaces is likely to increase.

Public space as a term and a notion is a bit elusive. No single definition of public space exists. There is no template for municipalities, or private agencies, dictating how to create successful civic space. Spaces serve different purposes, some of which may even clash cross-culturally. There is, however, a commonality. Public space, in whatever form, exists in every city in the world: there will always be places where people are congregating, socializing and fulfilling a basic need to interact. If one views the city as a body, its structures as bones, and its streets as veins, then its public spaces are the heart, where the people – the lifeblood of a city – go to be rejuvenated before branching back out into the limbs of the city. There is no denying that public space is as important to a city, as are the citizens that keep the city running. The following summary of the *Design of Public Spaces Symposium* is an exploration of the notion and significance of public space, and the implications for planners in caring for its quality and performance.

DENISE ALCANTARA

The human experience is an inseparable part of the built environment, as Denise Alcantara reminded us. She named three ingredients that make up a city: the tissue, the architecture, and most importantly, the users. When asked for a definition of tissue she described it as the fabric of houses, streets and networks. She calls the city “a live, dynamic, plural and diversified organism.” The tissue and the architecture of the city could be analogized to a body, while the users are the spirit that keeps it alive. Alcantara traveled from the global city of Rio de Janeiro to conduct a comparative analysis of the city’s downtown to San Diego’s. Her goal was to study how culture and social interaction contribute to the shaping of public spaces and create places in the context of historic preservation. She is interested in the human experience as place.

For Alcantara, the success of a place isn’t found only in the quantitative figures of traffic counts, income or density. She claims that success can be understood by the researcher through a method called “embodied observation.” Numbers and statistical analyses alone aren’t enough; rather, the place must be experienced by the researcher. One must become familiar with it and its inhabitants, to look and listen closely to truly see if it is alive and healthy. In her research, she is attempting to develop a method of qualifying downtown revitalization successes using innovative criteria. Her qualitative approach is founded on learning the public’s perception of downtown revitalization projects and assessing whether or not they actually use the spaces designated for them. While she does use some traditional methods, she also incorporates more phenomenological and subjective criteria often employed by social scientists and psychologists.

To understand a place today, one must understand its past. Rio de Janeiro was settled in the 16th century for its bay and harbor. In the early 1900s, about the same time that the City Beautiful Movement was sweeping the northern hemisphere, Rio had its own beautification movement inspired by Haussman’s Paris renovation. At that time, Rio also implemented a large scale renovation of its port area, with major land infills, and of its downtown. New streets, boulevards and esplanades were created, renovating most of the downtown area. Again in the 1930s, major demolitions of low-income housing in the central area made room for further street expansions and architectural upgrades. Vertical growth became the norm and symbol of modernity, but by the mid 1960s, modernism was being challenged in the US and Europe. Post-modernism placed the emphasis on the ambience, memory, tradition, identity, landmarks, and subjectivity of a place. In the following decade, San Diego began its downtown revitalization. Brazil, unfortunately, was still under a dictatorship and the modernist paradigm still prevailed. When the dictatorship ended in the 1980s, the democratic opening allowed a massive historic preservation and revitalization project called the Cultural Corridor.

Denise Alcantara is an architect-urbanist from Brazil with an MSc in Architecture, currently working towards her PhD at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. Her research focuses on the quality of places and environmental cognition. Denise has her own architectural practice and is also a lecturer at the Federal University in Rio. From February to November 2006 she was as a visiting scholar at San Diego State University.

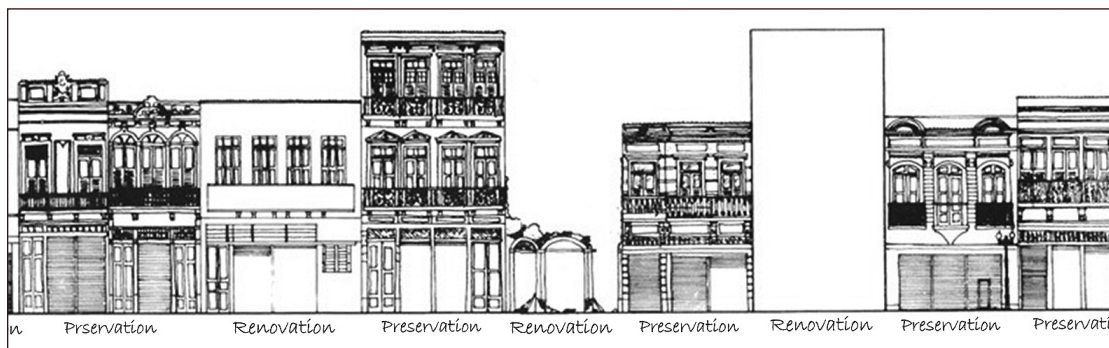


Figure 3
Guidelines from the Cultural Corridor Project manual, showing the different types of intervention, from preservation to reconstruction and renovation.

The Cultural Corridor Project, taken on by the municipal government of Rio de Janeiro, aimed at a few lofty goals. It set out to preserve historic architecture and cultural resources while stimulating social and economic revitalization. Its purpose was to renovate and revitalize architecture and urban settings by preserving historic character while simultaneously applying a contemporary vocabulary, avoiding historicism in the new or renovated buildings. The project began by identifying four key districts in and around the Central Business District (CBD). Although these areas were to be the focus for the Cultural Corridor Project, as Alcantara later explained, they were not the only ones to be affected.

The city government altered the downtown urban land-use regulations, established new design guidelines, and created an allowance for tax exemptions to business owners who renovated their exteriors. There was a lot of political support for the Cultural Corridor based on an alliance formed between the public and private sector, where business owners, community members, intellectuals, artists and socialites participated. The revitalization was intended to weave renovations and new buildings into the old fabric without overemphasizing either genre. The city created a special technical office of the Cultural Corridor that not only analyzed and approved projects in the area, but worked with owners toward the best solutions, developed local studies, and published design manuals to help disseminate the Corridor's goals. Opening a technical office in the area, in a preserved historic building at ground floor, was an important step to attain community involvement.

After the remodeling of buildings progressed, renovation of the street-scapes soon followed. A period of intense cultural movement followed, and new museums, theaters, art and exhibition centers were installed in the historic and preserved buildings. The Cultural Corridor project also expanded to incorporate the promotion of concerts, street markets, and many different social events to kept people coming back to enjoy the newly renovated public spaces. The project carefully massaged the tissue in the historic center of Rio, relieving tensions and blight while rejuvenating it for generations to come. The model proved so successful that it spread beyond the initial four areas it was designated to improve, and inspired other cities throughout Brazil to begin their own revitalization programs.

But Alcantara said she wanted to more clearly understand the nature of that success. She wanted to know about the people affected by the success.

"They make the city lively. They make the city a real place. They give meaning to the city. In my research, I'm very interested in knowing how they feel about the places how they interact, how they use it, how they appropriate the space. That's my interest."

She said her target population of interest were the workers, street vendors, consumers, artists, entertainers, and even the homeless. For her research, Alcantara studied quantifiable data such as

Figure 4
An area just outside the Corridor was also renovated and holds many social events connected to the surrounding antiques district, bars and shops.
(photo: D. Alcantara)



pre- and post-project building footprints, heights and uses, amount of public space, and pedestrian flows. But she is also looking deeper into the eyes and art of the people who give the place life. She looks at where and why people congregate, how artists perceive and interpret the space, what musicians write about it, and how it feels to walk through.

On all the levels that Alcantara has analyzed it so far, Rio's Cultural Corridor Project was an apparent success. Not only were the places physically renovated, but they were spiritually rejuvenated as well. The street-scaping and plazas are still heavily used and enjoyed by vendors, artists and entertainers, tourists and residents alike. There is always a lively mix of people inhabiting these spaces and business in the downtown area is booming again. It is Alcantara's preliminary conclusion that it was the integrative action of government, private sector and the community that made the recipe for success. Downtown revitalization, if done properly, can not only improve the appearance of a place, it can improve the lives of those who use it or live there. Getting back to Alcantara's analogy of the city as an organism, this historic preservation model not only treats the city's physical tissue, but also its *genius loci* – its spirit.

LAWRENCE HERZOG

"Buildings built without relation to the context around them is like sex without love." Larry Herzog opened his presentation with that line. Yes, sex without love is possible, but something is missing, something intangible – something like soul. In order for us to know the direction public spaces are going, Herzog wants us to understand where they've been, or rather, where we've been. He claims there are two ways of being a human in a city setting. He calls the two states "fast urbanism" and "slow urbanism." Fast urbanism is characterized by modernist architecture and thinking, technology, globalization, cyber space and simulated space. Slow urbanism, at the opposite end of the spectrum is more post-modern, and Eastern in its philosophy, with nature and organic experiences as the centrifugal pull. Without heralding one or the other, Herzog simply points out that we are currently in a state dominated by fast urbanist thinking.

Our culture's merge into fast urbanism was one that was seemingly out of our control. Modernist skyscrapers shot us up in elevators, put us into manicured indoor environments and killed the street. Freeways got us into cars and shot us down the superhighways at 90 miles an hour. Technology and the information highway took us out of our physical environment and placed us into a digital one. We've gotten closer physically and yet, strangely, further apart.

In his book *Return to the Center*, Herzog explores culture, public space and city building in this global era, wherein he offers suggestions for how to shock people into more public experiences. He calls upon architects and urban designers to craft spaces that create "simultaneous perception, that literally jolt people to come out of the cognitive places they are in, and to want to connect to a space." He refers to post-modernism's call for context, meaning, identity and sense of place as a starting point. He also emphasizes the value of history, tradition and collective memory to meet the human needs from spaces.

Cultures across the world can vary in so many ways, but they are all similar in that they cherish their public spaces. Some cultures may express their public spaces in different ways, and it is important for the planner and designer to be sensitive to this. In Latin culture, the street has been called the river of life. In American culture, street life carries a very negative connotation. Even regions within a particular country embrace their public domains in different ways. Using case studies from Spain

Larry Herzog is a professor at the Graduate Program in City Planning, School of Public Administration and Urban Studies, San Diego State University. He specializes in urban design and planning with an emphasis on Mexico, the Mexico-United States border and Latin America. His work has been published extensively, and he has six books; his last one is: "Return to the Center: Culture, Public Space and City Building in a Global Era" (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2006).



Figures 6,7 & 8
Public spaces in the downtowns of Mexico City,
Barcelona, and Los Angeles.
(photos: L. Herzog)



and Mexico, Herzog showed how the public sector can engage the private sector to spark the resurrection of some of our lost public spaces. In many plazas throughout Spain, Herzog noted what he terms “museumization of space.” Plazas that were once for the public have become privatized and are only accessible to patrons of plaza businesses. Benches have been removed and the only seats are at the café tables. When public space comes under the grip of profit, it becomes politicized. One response to this has been the creation of organic, improvisational public space in alleys and on street corners. Another is reliance on simulated space, where even more profit can be made.

Barcelona, Spain stands as a model for cities that wish to resurrect their public spaces. When it received the bid for the 1992 Olympics, it got to work in deciding how it would spend the money allocated for infrastructure improvements. The city planners first identified 160 tangible projects with public space as the anchor for redevelopment. They aimed to recover promenades, plazas, and close off streets to increase pedestrian connectivity.

Public art began to invade the city and its’ beaches. Their strategy which used the money to recover their history rather than erecting all new structures, validates the historic preservation and restoration model that is being proven time and time again the world over. People are intrinsically drawn to places that hold history. It gives us the much needed connection and meaning we are so often for searching for in our daily lives.

Mexico City holds Herzog’s closing lesson in civic space. In the mid 1900s, the Muralism Project, initiated by the Mexican government, engaged such artists as Diego Rivera and ignited the country’s public spaces with life and meaning. These spaces became alive with activism, the public voice, platforms for protest and synergy sites for cultural happenings. The energy that still remains in many of the mural projects and plazas set the stage for a huge victory for historical public spaces.

When McDonald’s wanted to build a fast food outlet in a historic Mexican plaza, the Mexican people rose in protest. Their problem wasn’t with McDonald’s per se; it was with the invasion of a global corporation on their cherished historical space.

This example leads to a larger lesson. Public spaces aren’t about profit. They are about human experience. Fast urbanism has not just taken away the physical public space; it has stolen our ability to experience public spaces. With the increasing “museumization”, synthesization and privatization of public space, it’s no wonder we are losing our ability to truly have the type of experience previous

generations have had in public spaces. It is our job to resuscitate these places, and the invaluable function they serve to civic life.

DANIEL LEVI

Public space and its significance vary across regions and cultures. Levi analyzed the complexity of Thailand's concept and usage of public space. As an environmental psychologist, Levi approached the quandary by looking at people instead of our profession's convention to focus on the place. Initially, Thailand confounded his understanding of the differences between public and private space.

Thailand exemplifies how public space can be characterized by purely temporary uses rather than pre-determined spaces. The usage of streets and sidewalks provide the first example of Thailand's unique understandings of space. Observing the streets and sidewalks started Levi's confusion. Bangkok is a chaotic city, and he had difficulty comprehending how people were functioning in it. The sidewalks and streets are active and dynamic places that the private realm has merged into, and they are used for much more than travel.

For instance, people cook on the streets. In Bangkok alone there are over three thousand street vendors cooking on the streets each day; their presence is so pervasive that it's a cultural norm that one should not buy food unless the cooking of it is visible). Sidewalks and streets are also appropriated for ritual use, such as selling flowers for shrines. There is a constant presence of purely temporary usages. Rivers and canals also exhibit this convergence of uses; they are used for municipal transport in addition to accommodating boats that function as markets, living spaces, and eating venues. Levi noted that in Thailand the existence of modern cities and the attendant shopping centers and stores did not displace traditional vendors and street life.

Night markets also illustrate the peculiarities of Thailand's usage of space. In Thailand, there are modern and traditional markets. One form of traditional market is the night market. Night markets are not stationary; instead, they spring up at night in vacant lots. They occur every night of the week in every major city. If a night market is broken up by the police, they simply move to a new place. Night markets are extremely social spaces, replete with music and vendors, where a wide variety of people congregate and socialize. They exemplify the complexity of public space in Thailand, which is often more of an event rather than a designated, fixed place.

Levi discovered that Western understandings of public space are woefully inappropriate in Thailand. Plazas, a common form of Western public space, exist in Thailand primarily in Western resorts. Thais do not use plazas; rather, many plazas in Thailand look as if they are imported from Los Angeles. Thailand's Royal Palace is an example. It is public in the sense that the government owns it, but by Thai standards it is expensive to visit and functions merely as a tourist attraction. Employees are the only Thais there. Other Western forms of public spaces in Thailand are urban parks, which depict the inadequacy of any universal standards of public space. The parks were based on imported concepts from England, and are relatively rare in Thailand.

Yet, Thailand does hold rich, stationary areas that serve as vibrant forms of public space: the Wats. Wats are Buddhist temples. Similar to cathedrals, they are surrounded by temple grounds. They act as an oasis in the midst of the chaotic city where people go to relax. Even though they are private spaces, they meet the needs of the Thai public. Wats are spaces that serve a variety of uses, from a place for outdoor food vendors to festivals.

Daniel Levi is a professor of environmental psychology at Cal Poly. He has numerous publications and the recent book "Group Dynamics for Teams" (Sage, 2001). His research has included topics such as perception of natural environment, impacts of technology, and responses to hazards. He conducts research with CRP faculty and students, and became more interested in design issues in Thailand during Cal Poly's Thailand studies program.



Figure 9
A busy corner in Bangkok (photo: D. Levi)



Figure 10
Vendors occupying the sidewalks. (photo: D. Levi)



Figure 11
Morning Thai Chi is collectively practiced in public parks. (photo: D. Levi)

Thailand also illustrates how public space can occur wherever public activity is present. For example, public exercise becomes a form of public space wherever it occurs. Recently, Thailand enacted a national healthcare program that requires all Thais to exercise. In theory, all are required to exercise once a day in the national exercise programs, from 7 to 9 in the morning or night. Exercise occurs on any surface that cars can be stopped from driving on, from basketball courts to blocked streets. There is a range of exercise options, from Thai Chi to aerobic dance groups. Public exercise in Thailand is striking because it depicts people's willingness as a group to take over space and claim it for a public use. It illustrates an organic initiation of public spaces versus a synthetic designation and creation.

Another illustration of the Thai's appropriation of space is the Sacred Forest. Deforestation is a critical problem in Thailand. It affects the lives of many because forests serve as water systems for many communities. Even though there are timbering laws, enforcement is a challenge. In order to further protect forests, monks have ordained trees as Buddhist monks. The sign of this ordination is a simple monk's sash. For the ordination, monks brought the community into the forest to witness the ceremony, thus leaving the community responsible for the protection of this public resource. Protection of the forests then became a religious devotion for the community. Now the forests are considered sacred and are no longer used as resource or tourist space.

Levi concluded his presentation with an assertion that cultures appropriate space, stating that:

"It's very hard, especially for an outsider, to look at space and understand how it's used, or what its designed purpose [is], or maybe [that] its designed purpose is sometimes secondary. That what I see in Thailand, is that the greatest of the public spaces... are private spaces. And the street, central to public space, is really a battle between public and private with private trying to take over."

In Thailand, the Western concept of public space is inadequate. Levi demonstrates that public space is far from having a unified coherency in theory and use. His investigation of public space in Thailand shows that the distinction between public and private spaces is not clear, and that the distinction may not always be relevant. Public space is a concept that differs across cultures and regions, and varies in how it is manifested in meeting the needs of the public.

LEO O'BRIAN

It is critical to study public spaces and realize they have a multitude of manifestations. Leo O'Brian's description of the creation of the Woodbury Village at Irvine, from the ground up, illustrates these complexities and depicts the way in which public space is being provided in Southern California. As he asserted, good public spaces are not just design solutions, but are also manifested in a variety of ownership agreements, public and private partnerships, and other idiosyncratic relationships.

Many examples can illustrate the dynamics of public space. Millennium Park in Chicago, for instance, is "a new validation of how carefully planned open space combined with a strong public/private partnership can begin new health." Boston's Emerald Necklace was a naturalistic solution to a drainage problem and the need for recreation, but it also created a strong civic identity and attracted people. New York's Central Park was created to address social and health needs for a crowded city. Yet, through the years there has been a steady erosion of municipalities' ability to make and maintain public space. Instead, other institutions, community or even private groups, are compensating for what municipalities have been unable to do, by creating alternative forms of public space. As O'Brian noted, "(the) ability of these spaces to resonate with civic identity is surprising," and has created a phenomenon in commercial and open space.

As municipalities withdraw from creating public space, alternative institutions are creating it in different forms. Universal's City Walk is an example of quasi-public space. O'Brian argued that public space is headed in that direction, and it exemplifies the dynamics of a commercial, synthesized environment. Even though there are many critics of this form of public space, it is evident that people enjoy it. Hence, it is an example that cannot be overlooked by designers. Fashion Island, a ritzy commercial development, is another example of a space enjoyed by the public that is not truly public. It has rules of behavior. It is a place that the homeless cannot live, but can sit for free. These examples illustrate that as public municipalities retreat from providing public space, many new issues arise.

Woodbury is yet another form of the new provision of public space. Its example illustrates some unique dynamics. It is a development in which privately created public spaces have been turned over to municipalities for maintenance. It is an example of a form of public space in a suburban, Southern Californian environment. Woodbury is located on the Irvine Ranch and extends 22 miles east toward Riverside, and occupies approximately 20 percent of Orange County. Its origins can be traced to the 1960s original master plan created by the Irvine family, which was made to change the pattern of development that was occurring in the area. It was a response to the suburban sprawl of the '60s. The original master plan was done at a regional level and has been successful in changing the prevalent form of sprawl development. It was able to tackle environmental and water quality issues in more meaningful ways. Because all the land included in the plan was owned by a single landowner, there has also been a high amount of design control.

Leo O'Brian is a landscape architect with a master's with emphasis on urban design (Harvard). He is vice president of Landscape Architecture of the Urban Planning and Design Group, Irvine Community Development Company, Newport Beach. He directs village planning and landscape architecture in the 120,000 acre Irvine Ranch, and is design coordinator between the company's retail, apartment and office groups. He creates urban design frameworks, and he has overseen the design for six villages in the Ranch.

Figure 12
Woodbury Village,
Irvine Ranch.

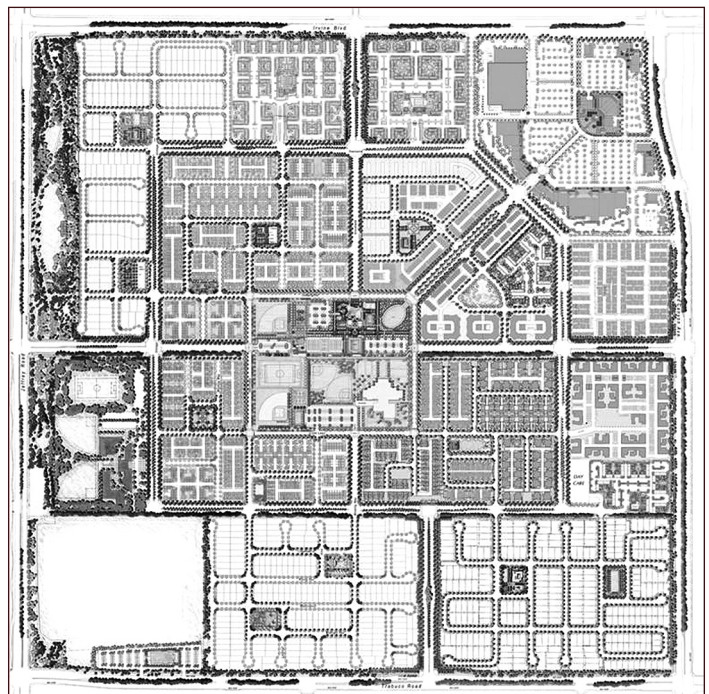




Figure 13
Tower marking one
of the entrances to
Woodbury.
(photo: V. del Rio).

The expansive development has preserved a total of 37,000 acres of open space. The open space framework dominates the site and gives it shape. The sphere of influence matches the ridge of the hills, and all arterials terminate into open space. The Irvine view shed permeates the site, and a network of trails connects the villages and parks. The Jeffery Open Space Trail is part of this network; it serves as the “necklace” of the site and creates a strong sense of identity. It converges onto a 70 acre sports and wilderness park. This park is an excellent example of a private project constructed as an amenity to the project, which was then turned over to a public agency to maintain. The park was also used to strengthen a sense of civic identity. Historic materials were incorporated, and it is replete with interpretive plaques and mosaic tiles that tell the history of the place. Native plants and grasses were used, making the park the largest planting of native grasses in Southern California. There are also a variety of other public parks, homeowners’ parks, and semi-public places in front of homes. There are also neighborhood parks, which are within a 5 minute walking distance of all homes.

The village has a combination of densities and uses. These include homes that range from affordable to market rate prices, apartments, daycares, access to employment, schools, and retail uses. The main center of the development is the plaza and recreation area. The urban design framework used creates a pedestrian scale development that is well connected to a regional system. There is a clear hierarchy of streets and landscaping, which is reinforced through ornamentations such as light fixtures. Towers are also oriented along the East-West corridor. Within this unifying framework exists an array of architectural diversity. There are a variety of different home types and design guidelines that shape setbacks, building masses, and landscaping and house treatments. The commercial site, the Commons, is an important aspect of the site as it provides two public spaces that are linked by a promenade, and is within walking distance of all homes. There is a combination of ownership including state, city, local school districts, and homeowners associations.

As a brand new development built from the ground up, this project is based on connectivity and an even distribution of parks. The Irvine Company was in a unique situation to build the project from scratch, which makes it unlike many. As O’Brian asserted, “the techniques of assembling successful municipal open space may not always be done by one entity as in the past.” Rather, examples typically depict “a combination of many ownership entities all working together to create a community vision that creates the best synergy and best results.” O’Brian concluded by observing that Woodbury is an excellent example of this synergy that is the result of the shifting responsibility for the creation of public space.

CONCLUSION

The variety of types of public spaces covered by these four presentations implies the inadequacy of traditional notions. Public space is not simply a space that is created: it appears to happen in multiple ways whenever a space is claimed for public use. This was apparent in all four presentations. O’Brian pointed to the commercial spaces in southern California that have become quasi-public,



Figure 14
A boulevard connects
the park and club to the
shopping district. (photo:
courtesy Irvine Co).

such as Universal City Walk and Fashion Island. Levi explained how public activity is able to claim and create public space in Thailand. Alcantara described the unexpected creation of vital urban places through structural renovation. Herzog illustrated how spaces where people converge are given unique meanings, whether through public ritual or protest. These diverse varieties of public space deserve a greater understanding.

Public space does not have to be limited by designated environments. Instead, it can transcend its predetermined physical limitations and sprout out of the public's organic spontaneity. Rather than confining the public through a segmented conception of what public space should be, as planners, we could encourage the public to feel as if they own the city, and that they are responsible for making it a real place. Public life should spill into all aspects of the city. Also, we must remember the enduring link between the physical environment and public space. In Brazil, what began as a purely structural and aesthetic renovation of historical buildings had the unexpected effect of mobilizing the community to reclaim their public spaces. How do we combine a focus on improving the physical qualities of a space with the strengthening of its cultural and social aspects? Alcantara's example seems to imply that civilian mobility can accompany a purely physical focus, while Levi's suggests that structural elements are not always important or even relevant to public space. So where does this leave us in understanding public space?

Public space, aptly named, is a place accessible to the public. It is this access and use that makes a space truly public, regardless of how it was created. Some difficult issues arise when looking at public space which is not yet inhabited by people. How can it be judged as successful if there is no public present by which to gauge it? O'Brian's description of the Village of Woodbury illustrates these challenges. Are the criteria for public space satisfied merely when a space is *intended* for use by the public, regardless of whether or not the public actually ends up utilizing it in the future? Woodbury stands as a lesson for planners and designers. Not only does it show the great creative lengths that our design skills are capable of taking us, but it also depicts the challenges of creating public space from the ground up, without a public to speak of. Yet, it provides lessons that need to be learned in the burgeoning cities of California. The value of O'Brian's presentation lies in its exemplifying how public space can be provided by alternative institutions in today's context, in light of the diminishing initiative on the part of municipalities.

The presentations also suggest that the public/ private dichotomy may no longer be entirely apt in an understanding of public space. The two may be so inextricably linked that perhaps the distinction is only critical in deciding who provides or maintains public spaces. As O'Brian stated, there is a multiplicity of manifestations of public space that result from a wide variety of partnerships. Public and private life are two sides of the same coin; taken together, they form the aggregate whole of urban life. So while it may be necessary to distinguish between the two at times, an overemphasis on understanding them as polar opposites will limit our understanding of how urban life matures and richens. For instance, Levi described how in Thailand, the notions of public and private are not relevant. Public spaces such as the street are utilized for 'private' uses, while private spaces, such as the *Wats*, are used for public interaction. This illustrates the fruition of life that can develop when public and private are no longer used as categories that limit the eruption of life.

Drawing on the many lessons we can learn from foreign cultures about their propagation of public space and its intrinsic social value, it is obvious that planners have their work set out for them in understanding how public space is successfully fostered. While all the complicated pieces of

this puzzle are not yet clear, these presentations have identified what a few of the pieces are: the relationship between the public and private domains, the responsibility for creating and maintaining public space, be it citizens, municipalities or private developers, and the vital nature of these public spaces to civilian life.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following is a summary of the audience questions and the speakers responses.

Q. (To All) *Regarding sustainability, and Modernist versus Urbanist conceptions: how do you make a New Urbanist development like Woodbury more sustainable?*

A. Larry Herzog: For too long sustainable development has been separated from urban planning and the environment, when it should have been an integral part. An important aspect of sustainability is the idea of creating a community. Not every place has a traditional downtown, but places do need a center. In Leo's project, I would like to see more retail that is not segregated from the community. Retail uses should spill into the community along the promenade, which would make the mixed-use portion of the site come to life. Also, some of the parks in the Woodbury project seem very private and isolated. But Woodbury is above and beyond the suburban developments of the 60s and 70s, which are highly unsustainable and dependent on daily auto trips.

I would like to point out to Mexico for lessons in sustainability. The national conversation of immigration and security focuses on the negative aspects of our neighbor to the South, yet Mexico provides wonderful lessons about daily city life. As scholars and planners, we need to celebrate the life south of the border rather than encourage anti-immigrant laws, such as those created in Escondido, California, that mandate the checking of residency status. Our role as planners is about sustainability and celebrating culture as how to create great places.

A. Denise: Sustainability is related to the three ecologies as proposed by philosopher Felix Guattari: social, environmental, and mental. Sustainability not only refers to nature and its preservation, and it is not only how we interact and use spaces, and conceive of private and public spheres, but it is also refers to a mental ecology, a mental state. Each individual needs to be focused on these three main aspects.

A. Dan: Sustainability means different things in developing countries. For Thailand, it is about the balance between urbanization and the large rural communities. The government has done a lot to improve the life in rural villages so that people do not feel they have to migrate to the urban centers.

A. Leo: A recent conference, the International Federation of Landscape Architecture, discussed this topic. The number one element in sustainability is poverty. Poverty deteriorates landscapes, and finding the solution to sustainability will be tied to solving the problem of poverty. There is also the issue of scale in sustainability. Designers are often asked to create boutique environmental projects. Yet Woodbury is on such a large scale. In comparison, Village Homes is only 1/8 the size of Woodbury. How can sustainability be done at a larger scale? In doing such a large project, the Irvine Company was able to work with multiple agencies to create the largest reclaimed water system in the world. This reclaimed water irrigates 98% or more of Woodbury's landscaping. Leo is encouraged by the shift towards walkability that is occurring. The problem in Woodbury is that there is no supporting population. Originally, a light rail system was planned in Irvine over 30 years ago, but it is not going

to happen due to “NIMBYism” (not-in-my backyard-ism). This was a disappointment... sustainability is not as easy as we would like it to be.

Q. (To Denise Alcantara) *Can you clarify your concept of urban tissue?*

Denise: Urban tissue is the same as urban fabric; it is how parcels, structures and streets come together, how they relate to each other. It tells stories, and gives meanings.

Q. (To Daniel Levi) *Can you elaborate on night markets, and how they are not a designated space? Are they illegal?*

A. Dan: Night markets can occur in vacant lots, blocked off streets, parking lots, and along streets by blocking lanes. As cities develop, some night markets are being pushed to the periphery. However, some Thai cities block off streets to allow the markets to stay. They are not illegal; however, the police may collect use fees from vendors on streets and sidewalks.

Q. (To Denise Alcantara) *Looking at the expansion in the metropolis of Rio, was preservation and conservation a strategy and good mechanism to initiate the creation of public spaces?*

A. Denise: The process was interactive. It did not relate directly to public spaces, it was about renovating old structures, old buildings, and areas that were abandoned. This process is still being used. At the start, it was simply about buildings, but afterwards, there was more of a focus on public areas. For instance, street vendors and bad sidewalks eventually led to the redesign of streetscaping and rights-of-way, which in turn improved public spaces.

Q. (To Larry Herzog) *All of your presentations are important for the debate in design, relating to a European sensitivity and more of a European sense of the legitimacy of what public space is as a territorial understanding. Public space is about a democratic process, but most of the places in your presentation were done by the rulers; so, what is your idea of public participation today and the contemporary stance of public restoration?*

A. Larry: The question of what is public and private is important. As Leo pointed out, private spaces are the public spaces of the future. How public spaces are created is important, but the line between private and public spaces is fuzzy. Maybe it no longer matters if a space is public or private, but only if it is a dynamic and well-designed place that creates community. In my book I discuss the politics of downtown redevelopment in Mexico City. The Alameda section is one of the most controversial areas of redevelopment. It has a majestic park, with a turn of the century art deco style and a wonderful scale, and it is heavily used by the working class. It was threatened in the late 1980's when land was being bought up for redevelopment. Plans were not needed, and the owners could essentially do whatever they wanted with the area, but the community stood up and refused to allow redevelopment to happen. There was a tremendous amount of public participation to influence this outcome. It is also the story of protecting the rights of street vendors and small business owners, and about retaining a sense of place and well-being.

In Mexico, public space is used regularly by the poor as a place to protest. It is one of the only means they have to make their voices heard. The protests are covered by newspapers and television. This is a right held by the poor, the working class, and women. It is a very important tradition in Mexican culture. The politics of public space is about the larger politics of downtown redevelopment. Public space is determining the future of downtown; how we think about it is different than just creating

profitable space. In this process, there are different political evolutions of the community getting involved. The role of the public participation in downtown redevelopment is fundamental.

Q. (To Daniel Levi) *Your topic brought up the question of what public is, and what makes it public. In looking at domesticity coming into the public realm, if the public claims a space, one could argue that the difference between public and private is not appropriate. Is public space an intersection of the private?*

A. Dan: Now, public and private should be thought of more as whether or not a place allows a kind of behavior, and to what extent. The American distinction between public and private may not be valid in more traditional and collectivist cultures. In Thailand, the issue is not whether a private vender is using a public space. The issue is whether the vender is adding value to the social use of a space.

Q. (To Leo O'Brian) *Your presentation is more tangible, and illustrates the limitations of New Urbanism. With a lack of density and civic identity, Woodbury seems irresponsible. Why should we perpetuate this type of development?*

A. Leo: Andres Duany (famous new urbanist author and designer) would not agree that this project is an example of New Urbanism. However, in order to change constraints of the project, they have to deal with multiple agencies regulations and standards involving traffic counts and arterials. As planners, principles would be easier to incorporate if agencies would support designers. As a firm that does master planned communities, densities are a result of market input. But, this development is also the highest density development the company has ever done.